

Not My Circus, Not My Monkeys:
Why the Path to Transformational Customer Experience Runs Through Employee Experience
Lance Gibbs

SYNOPSIS

Increasingly, organizations understand the importance of creating an exceptional customer experience—yet many struggle to achieve it. In *Not My Circus, Not My Monkeys*, Lance Gibbs argues that what holds companies back the most is a subpar *employee experience*. The book outlines the biggest internal issues that affect customers and offers strategies to address them.

Gibbs is a self-described “process nerd.” However, he points out, when organizations are obsessed with process, they tend to treat employees more like machines than people. Gibbs is all for process, provided it amplifies employees’ voices and addresses their human needs.

According to the author, today’s work processes mandate conformity, which creates inauthentic situations and lower motivation, productivity and innovation. Organizations, he says, should instead promote “constructive nonconformity” by focusing on Seven Pillars of Employee Experience:

- **Authorization to Act** – Allow employees to decide how to best approach their duties. It’s unfair to hold them accountable for their actions without giving them power to dictate or influence what they are.
- **Collaboration** – Make sure all groups that any given process cuts across are represented and feel authorized to act. Otherwise, they’ll be negotiating, not collaborating.
- **Failing Fast** – Try new solutions, see if they work, and if not, pivot quickly. Resist a culture of endless theorizing and PowerPoint tweaking.
- **Understanding and Applying Customer and Employee Insights** – Mine employee data like you do customer data, do it transparently, and share what you’ve learned with employees.
- **Automation** – Don’t automate too much, too fast, and focus automation on freeing employees for more interaction and high-value work.
- **Integrated Perspectives** – Build a holistic platform for everyone to share their views about the customer experience, make sure leaders truly listen, and let employees design the needed changes organically.
- **The Plumbing** – Ensure the holistic platform connects people reliably, discourages silos and makes information available and digestible to all.

Not My Circus, Not My Monkeys uses examples from many companies to illustrate how employee experience drives customer experience. The book is not a how-to manual, but it builds a strong case for change and offers a solid framework for making employee experience an organizational priority.

Review by Keith Cucuzza, Bridge Consulting

SAMPLE LEARNINGS

Key advice from the book includes:

- Gain employee experience insights with two simple questions: “What does a great day at work feel like?” and “What are the things that help you feel that way?”
- Crowdsource from employees what a great customer experience looks like to create holistic, shared perspective.
- Encourage managers to be vulnerable, share their failures and tell their teams mistakes are okay.
- Establish managers as the custodians of disciplines, but make teams the owners of outcomes.
- Take a hard look at your company’s tools; if you rely heavily on Excel and email to pass data, you may be stuck in the past.
- Aim to make employee interfaces as useful and elegant as those designed for your customers.
- Don’t forget that technology isn’t enough. There’s no replacement for in-person interaction.